

# AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for  
Persons with Disabilities**

## **Science Museum Community Ambassador Maria Cabrera**



**Museum of Science**

On a trip to the United Nations at age eight, Maria Cabrera decided she wanted to be a UN interpreter, a “communicator for all people. I loved the sound of all the different languages.”

Today, at the Museum

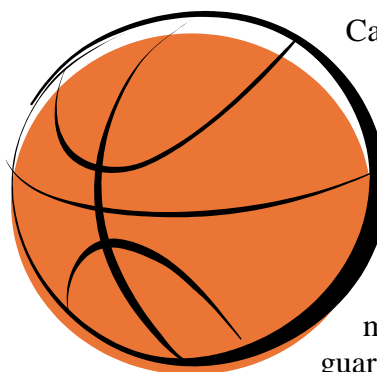
of Science, located in both Cambridge and Boston, she says, “I live my dream, using my Spanish, my experiences as a Latina and single parent, and my differently-abled perspective to encourage people to use the Museum’s resources.”

Today, Cabrera invites people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to expand their understanding of music in *Wild Music: Sounds and Songs from Life*, on exhibit at the Museum until January 3, 2010. Here, visitors will discover that nature is filled with “musicians” who create musical masterpieces to communicate with each other. And they’ll find out how the sounds of other living creatures, from tiny insects and birds to giant whales, inspire human compositions.

Through hands-on activities, visitors can explore sounds and music from the ocean, forest, and city; compose their own masterpieces using prerecorded audio, animal voices, percussion instruments, and live vocals; investigate how human voices work and compare to those of birds; and learn how animals use sound to identify themselves and form social groups.

**(More on Maria Cabrera, page 2)**

## **Cambridge Man Honored for Basketball Prowess**



Cambridge native David Harrison was recently inducted into the New England Basketball Hall of Fame at Mohegan Sun in Connecticut. Harrison was honored for his many years of play as a guard in wheelchair

basketball for several Boston-area teams.

Harrison was selected as a guard for the USA Paralympics basketball team in 1976 in Toronto, in which the US Team won the Gold Medal. In nominating him for the Hall of Fame, Armand “Tip” Thiboutot stated: “[Harrison] is as close to what I would describe as a mistake-free player as anyone I have ever coached.”

Thiboutot described Harrison as “A fine defensive player with excellent speed and quickness in relation to other...players..., [Harrison] skillfully exploited sound wheelchair positioning to guard players in higher, more functional disability-related classes.”

“As a passer,” said Thiboutot “he avoided the spectacular in favor of the sure pass and was particularly adept at feeding low-post players, often launching pin-point trajectories that barely cleared the outstretched hands of frustrated defenders. He possessed exceptionally great hands that enabled him to catch the most difficult of passes.”

**(More on Cambridge Man, page 3)**

## Maria Cabrera (cont'd)

*Wild Music* is designed to be as accessible as possible, particularly for those who are blind or have low vision, by incorporating tactile experiences, controls and graphics, narration in computer interactives, and audio descriptions. This exhibition is also accessible for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing with visual representations of sound and video captioning. The exhibit is bilingual (English and Spanish), and as always, sighted guide tours will be offered for visitors who are blind or have low vision.

Since 1995, Cabrera has introduced underrepresented cultural, ethnic, and disability communities to the Museum of Science via partnerships with over 3,500 organizations in Greater Boston and surrounding areas. The Museum is one of only a few science museums in the country with a department dedicated solely to community relations. With funding from the Lowell Institute and the Museum's corporate members, over 230,000 underrepresented visitors (more recently, 15,000 - 20,000 a year) have enjoyed free or discounted admission to the Museum or participated in Museum or neighborhood-based community events in the last 14 years. Over half those people are from Greater Boston. As the Massachusetts state representative to NEMA (New England Museum Association), Cabrera also helps to make NEMA's 433 museums "accessible to as many people of different ethnicities, cultures, and abilities as possible."

Marcelo Juica, executive director, Latino After School Initiative, says, "Maria has been a tremendous resource to our community. Her commitment to grassroots organization and participation in community projects is most appreciated by our families, children and youth."

Born in Santiago, Cuba, Cabrera came to Boston in 1957. She grew up in Roxbury and Jamaica Plain, speaking both Spanish and English. She loved music and dancing herself and often choreographed her 14 cousins. She attended the University of Massachusetts, Boston, from 1978 to 1981. On a 1977 camping trip, Cabrera contracted Guillain-Barré Syndrome, an inflammation of the nerves in the

extremities. "I had to relearn how to walk, cook, and drive," she says. Her brother Roy "reassured me when everyone else wanted to pamper me. He believed I could climb stairs and even took me dancing. Now, I can do almost everything but Double Dutch and run."

When Cabrera arrived at the Museum of Science in 1995 from the Children's Museum, she was excited to reach more people. Encouraging new audiences to enjoy the Museum, she leads Celebrating Neighborhoods events for Cambridge, Boston, Chelsea, and Lynn residents. FREE events include an IMAX film or Planetarium show. She and her "Street Team" of teen volunteers and staff also take hands-on science and engineering

activities to community fairs and festivals.

Says Cabrera, "The vision of the Museum of Science is one where everyone can participate equally in the excitement of science and technology learning. While creating relationships with new audiences, we strive to break down barriers to access, whether caused by finances, culture, language, education or ability. The Museum has steadily become more inclusive of all cultures and underrepresented communities and the opportunities to connect people to a better future."



**Maria Cabrera, Museum of Science**

## Access at the Museum of Science

One of the leading science museums in the country, Boston's Museum of Science (MOS) seeks to transform the way we all view science and technology. MOS has also been a leader in accessibility for people with disabilities, always striving to find new ways to present science and technology topics in a way that is accessible to everyone. MOS actually straddles the Cambridge-Boston line, sitting on a bridge where Rt. 28/O'Brien Highway crosses over the Charles River. MOS's website provides a wealth of information:

<[www.mos.org](http://www.mos.org)>. To learn about the accessibility of various exhibits, shows, programs and presentations, visit <[www.mos.org/visitor\\_info/accessibility](http://www.mos.org/visitor_info/accessibility)> for the Accessibility Search tool.

### Specific MOS access related services:

- There are two public phones with **TTY machines and amplified volume**: Green Wing, Level 1; and Red Wing near the coat room.
- A version of the **Visitor's map / guide** in seven foreign languages is [available online](#) and at the Information Booth.
- The Museum has **10 wheelchairs, seven strollers, and five electric scooters** that guests may borrow for free, first-come, first-served. Please speak to an information specialist at the Information Desk in the lobby.
- **Sighted Guides** are available to enhance the Museum experience of visitors who are blind or low-vision. For reservations, please call 617-589-0315 two weeks in advance.
- An **American Sign Language (ASL)** interpreter can be arranged with at least two weeks' notice, based on availability. Please call 617-589-0315.
- The **Computer Clubhouse** now offers youth assistive software and technology to youth with disabilities.
- In the **Omni Theater** closed captioning, amplified narration, descriptive narration, foreign language translations, and show scripts are available for selected films. Limited numbers of infrared headsets and/or reflectors for captioning are available from ushers at the theater entrance 15

minutes before show time. A form of ID must be offered to borrow equipment. For quicker service, make a request at the Museum box office when purchasing or picking up tickets.

- In the **Planetarium** a captioning system and an FM assistive listening system with amplification are available for selected shows. Notify an usher to borrow a system (a form of ID must be provided). Scripts are available for selected shows. Planetarium staff will provide Braille constellation maps and tactile pictures on request.

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## Cambridge Man (cont'd)

A lifelong Cambridge resident, Harrison attended Cambridge public schools until he was a sophomore at Cambridge Latin high school in 1969, when he sustained a spinal cord injury and began using a wheelchair. Harrison completed his high school training at the Massachusetts Hospital School, where he was first introduced to the sport of wheelchair basketball. For the past 35 years, Harrison has worked as an orthotics specialist at the Brockton VA Medical Center, designing and fabricating custom orthotics for disabled US military veterans.



**Hall of Fame Inductee David Harrison (seated) and his brothers (left to right) Michael, Donald, and Douglas**

Asked for his reaction to being inducted into the New England Basketball Hall of Fame, Harrison said, "It's a great honor... it really made me feel good to be recognized in this way."

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## Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- Nov. 16      **Open Support Group for Adults on the Autism Spectrum** – Meets on Wednesdays, 7-8:30 pm at the offices of the Autism Association of New England (AANE), 85 Main St., Suite 101, Watertown, MA. Hosted by Jamie Freed; a \$5 donation is suggested. RSVP to 617-393-3824, x302 or <Max.Sederer@aane.org>.
- Nov. 17 & 19      **MDDA (Manic Depression & Depressive Association) Support Group** at Mass. General Hospital meets every Tuesday and Thursday, 7 - 9 p.m. on the 4th floor in the Yawkey Building. Follow the signs. Meetings are free and open to public. For more information call 617-855-2795.
- Nov. 18      **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) meets in Cambridge near Harvard Square, 6 -7:30 p.m. every Wednesday. If you are interested, contact Angelica Sawyer at 617- 661-3117.
- Nov. 18      **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 - 9 p.m. at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- Nov. 18      **NAMI Connection** – a support group for adults with mental illness, meets every Wednesday evening, 7 - 8:30 pm at Cambridge Hospital, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Learning Center rooms C & D. The group is **free** and open to all who self-identify as having a mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. For more information, contact Carter at 617-776-7972 or <stbosai@arczip.com>.
- Nov. 18      **Senior Support Group for caregivers over 60** – meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Family Resource Center, 20 Gould Street in Reading. Share and learn with other seniors who have adult family members with developmental disabilities. For exact meeting time during summer months, contact Michelle Faugno at <fam2fam@thearc.org> or Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, 16 Warwick Road, Melrose, MA 02176.
- Nov. 18      **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 – 3 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 2nd floor Conference Room #2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or request interpreters. Security measures require proper ID for access to meetings.
- Nov. 18      **An IEP for My Child workshop in Medford** – Every child with a disability who receives special education services must have an Individual Education Program (IEP). This workshop takes parents step-by-step through the development of the IEP including how to articulate a Vision for their child, use the results of evaluations to write measurable goals and how to assess their child's progress. Workshop materials are available in Spanish. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), the workshop will be offered at the South Medford Fire Station Community Center, Zero Medford Street, 7 - 9 p.m. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.
- Nov. 18      **“Feeling for Form” introductory tour of MFA for blind & low vision visitors** – The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston offers a series of introductory one-on-one guided tours to the Museum and its collections for blind and low vision individuals who want to build a deeper relationship with the Museum. Each monthly session focuses on a different collection and includes wayfinding and verbal description of spaces. These tours are given on the 1st Sunday of the month at 10:30 am and the 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 pm. Individuals can attend one or more sessions, whichever interests them. Guided tours can also be scheduled at other times. Pre-registration is required. Contact Valerie Burrows at 617-369-3302 or <vburrows@mfa.org> to register. The next session is Sunday, December 6. Call 617-369-3189 or email <access@mfa.org> or go to <www.mfa.org>. for more information The MFA is located at 465 Huntington Avenue in Boston, 02115 and is accessible by the Green line “E” train to the “Museum of Fine Arts” stop, or the Orange line train to the “Ruggles” stop.
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- Nov. 19 **“Piecing the Puzzle,” a new Parent to Parent Autism Support Group** – meets in Jefferson Park Community Room #1, at Jackson Place in Cambridge every Thursday from 10 am to 12 noon. Purpose is to provide support and understanding to families with children on the autism spectrum and to increase autism awareness in the community. Sponsored by Cambridge Family & Children’s Services in collaboration with the Dept. of Developmental Services (DDS). For more information and to become a member contact Malek Lahlali at 617-876-4210, x158, <mlallali@helpfamilies.org> or Yevett Fraticelli at x105, <piecingthepuzzle@yahoogroups.com>.
- Nov. 19 **Building Strong Communities through Fair Housing** – This training will take place at Medford City Hall, Council Chambers, 85 George P. Hassett Dr. in Medford from 1 to 4 pm. Barbara Chandler, Fair Housing Manager for Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, will address the principles of fair housing, who is served by fair housing and the benefits to the community, types of discrimination, protected classes, and strategies for people with disabilities. RSVP by Nov. 17 at 781-393-2501 or <dmcleod@medford.org>. The event is sponsored by the Medford Human Rights Commission and Commission for Persons with Disabilities through the Medford Office on Human Diversity and Compliance.
- Nov. 19 **Regional Meeting for Local Disability Commissions in Medford** – All regional Commissions or Committees are invited to meet with the statewide Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) 5:30 - 7:30 pm to discuss issues of common concern to constituents with disabilities with an update on State initiatives. This meeting will be in the Howard Alden Council Chamber (second floor) at the Medford City Hall, 85 George P. Hassett Dr. For more information, contact Diane McLeod at 781-393-2501 and <dmcleod@medford.org> or Robyn Powell <rpowell@dpcma.org>.
- Nov. 19 **Autism Support Group** – meets 3rd Thursday of each month, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Central Square Branch of Cambridge Public Library, 45 Pearl Street in Cambridge. For more information contact Lorraine Iacopucci at <liacopucci@nsarc.org> or 978-624-2304.
- Nov. 23 **Basic Rights workshop in Somerville** – designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child’s eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the Capuano Early Childhood Center, 150 Glen Street. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>. This workshop will be repeated on Dec. 2 in Cambridge and on Feb. 9 in Waltham. See those listings for specific time and location. For a full schedule of workshops throughout the year, go to <www.fcsn.org/pti/workshops/home.php#schedule>.
- December 2 **Injured Worker Support Meetings** – (*previously listed as RSI – repetitive strain injury*) Meetings are scheduled by appointment, often the first Wednesday of the month, 5:15 - 6:45 pm; call RSI Action at 617-247-6827 to set up a meeting. Meetings/appointments usually take place at 650 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, near Kenmore Square. Volunteers provide resources and support. For more information, call 617-247-6827, or go to <www.rsiaction.org>.
- December 2 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) Annual Meeting** – Come meet the DPC staff and Board of Directors and learn about the exciting projects DPC is currently working on. The meeting will be at 6:00 pm in the offices of Foley Hoag, LLP, Seaport West, 155 Seaport Blvd. in Boston, 02210. The Disability Policy Consortium, Inc. <www.dpcma.org> is an organization of volunteer disability rights activists who share a common goal of equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities. For more information or to request specific accommodations, contact Robyn Powell at <rpowell@dpcma.org>.
- December 2 **Basic Rights workshop in Cambridge** – designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child’s eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered 6:15 – 8:15 pm at the Windsor Street Health Center, 119 Windsor Street. See the Nov. 23 listing for details.
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- December 3 **Employment and Benefits Conference for individuals with disabilities** – This is a FREE one-day training presented by attorneys from the Disability Law Center (DLC). Participants will learn about their rights when applying for a job, avoiding problems with SSI / SSDI when going back to work, and how to get the accommodations they need. The seminar will be held in the Community Room of the Lynn Housing Authority, 10 Church Street, Lynn, 01902 from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. A light lunch will be provided. To register, go to <[www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org)> or call 800- 872-9992 voice, 800- 381-0577 TTY or write to DLC, 11 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108. CART and ASL will be provided if requested by November 23, 2009. Spanish language interpretation will be provided.
- December 5 ***Emmanuel's Gift*, another FREE movie presented by Disability Reframed: a Community Film Series** – Come see this miraculous film about what one disabled man in Ghana recently accomplished. Screening is 2-5 pm at the Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. in Central Square, Cambridge. Discussion after the film will be led by native South African physician and jazz musician, Stanley Sagov. This is a free public event; bring your friends. The site is wheelchair accessible. No need to RSVP. For questions, contact the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-492-0235 TTY or <[mmuehe@cambridgema.gov](mailto:mmuehe@cambridgema.gov)>.
- December 6 **“Feeling for Form” introductory tour of MFA for blind & low vision visitors** – The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston offers a series of introductory one-on-one guided tours to the Museum and its collections for blind and low vision individuals. These tours are given on the 1st Sunday of the month at 10:30 am and the 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 pm. See the Nov. 18 listing for details.
- December 8 **Boston Voice Users is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software.** They meet 7:30 – 9:30 pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.135. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <[www.bostonvoiceusers.org](http://www.bostonvoiceusers.org)>.
- December 10 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting & Holiday Gathering** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 8:30p.m. The business section of this meeting will be abbreviated so there will be time for socializing. Past and future Commission members are welcome along with family and friends. Bring a holiday treat for the refreshment table.
- December 16 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 to 3 p.m. See Nov. 18 listing for details.
- December 22 **Adult Services Holiday Party & Yankee Swap** – Sponsored by Asperger's Association of New England (AANE), 6:30 – 9 pm at Uno Bar and Grill, 287 Washington St. in Newton, MA. Cost per person is \$15 (plus up between \$5 and \$10 for Yankee Swap Gift). RSVP is required; email <[Max.Sederer@aane.org](mailto:Max.Sederer@aane.org)> or call 617-393-3824 x302.
- January 13 **Free introductory tour of MFA in sign language & with assistive listening devices** – This is the first of a new monthly offering at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. These tours will be given at 6:30 pm on the second Wednesday of each month. No pre-registration is required; meet at the Sharf Visitor Center in the MFA. For more information call 617-369-3302 voice, 617-267-9703 TTY or email <[access@mfa.org](mailto:access@mfa.org)>. For more information about accessible programs and location of the MFA, see the Nov. 18 listing “Feeling for Form.”
- January 18 **Free MFA Community Day accessible to people with disabilities** – The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) offers free admission for everyone one day each month. There are tours for families and adults, as well as art-making activities for children. All are accessible to people who are blind or have low vision, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and individuals with other disabilities. ALD, ASL and ASL Interpreted gallery activities are available on Open House Days. For more information or to secure a sighted guide, call 617-369-3302 or email <[vburrows@mfa.org](mailto:vburrows@mfa.org)>.
- January 13 **Transition 101 workshop in Watertown** – This workshop addresses effective use of the IEP and Transition Planning Form for students who are ages 14 – 22. Individualized, person centered planning of curriculum and supports throughout high school leads to better post high school outcomes and opportunities in education, training, and/or employment for students with disabilities. Discussion includes age of majority,

self determination and self advocacy, life skill development and preparing students to pursue as independent an adult life as possible. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN), this workshop will be offered at the Cunniff Elementary School library, 246 Warren Street from 5-7 pm. Pizza and childcare will be provided. Register by contacting FCSN at 617-236-7210 or 800-331-0688 or online at <register@fscn.org>.

January 14 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.

February 9 **Basic Rights workshop in Waltham will be presented in English and Spanish** – designed to help parents learn how to be effective partners with the school, to decide the child's eligibility for special education, to plan, make decisions and to monitor the educational progress of their child. There will be two presentation rooms, one for each language. Workshop materials are also available in Portuguese and Russian. These workshops will be at Waltham High School, 617 Lexington Street, Waltham, 7- 9 pm. See Nov. 23 listing for contact information and registration details.

February 11 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 – 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.

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## Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

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**Access Notice:** The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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 Sam Seidel, *Vice-Mayor*  
 Henrietta Davis  
 Marjorie C. Decker  
 Craig A. Kelley  
 David P. Maher  
 Kenneth E. Reeves  
 Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.  
 Larry W. Ward

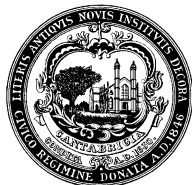
### City Administration

Robert W. Healy, *City Manager*  
 Richard C. Rossi, *Deputy City Manager*  
 Ellen Semonoff, *Assistant City Manager, Human Service Programs*

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### Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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 Dave Wood, *Secretary*      Kate Patton Regal  
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 Laura Brelsford      Don Summerfield  
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**AccessLetter** is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,  
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51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

**Read past issues on our website: [www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm](http://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm)**

If you would rather receive your copy of **AccessLetter** electronically, please provide us with your name and e-mail address. To request that your name be removed from our mailing list, contact us at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, 617-349-4766 Fax, or [cthompson@cambridgema.gov](mailto:cthompson@cambridgema.gov)

**Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities**

51 Inman Street, second floor  
Cambridge, MA 02139